

Arne Naess and Alan Drengson

II. DEEP ECOLOGY MOVEMENT

Deep Ecology Movement supporters have comprehensive worldviews of humans in harmony with nature; these are “*ecosophies*” or “*ecowisdom*,” a response to the ecological crisis. The movement translates these worldviews into action and social reform.

Supporters of the deep ecology movement contrast their approach with “shallow” or reform movements. Deep Ecology Movement supporters hold that every living being has intrinsic or inherent value which gives it the right to flourish independent of its usefulness to humans. All life is interrelated, and living beings, humans included, depend on the ecological functions of others. Supporters of the deep ecology movement tend to oppose the degradation of nature except to satisfy *vital needs*. The long-range integrity and health of the ecosystems of Earth are of fundamental ethical importance.

The ecological crisis has deep roots in misguided, anthropocentric attitudes about the dominion of humans on Earth. These exploitative, consumptive attitudes, according to deep ecology movement principles cannot be overcome without significant social changes; these include changes in the lifestyles of those who live in the rich countries. Such changes can emerge from a philosophical or religious basis that nurtures a sense of *personal responsibility*, not simply to persons now living, but to future human generations as well as to fauna and flora. The current human population is already too large in many countries; further population increases will lower the quality of life for humans and nonhuman forms of life. Thus, a smaller human population is desirable and can be achieved by reducing birthrates over several centuries.

The deep ecology movement can be contrasted with the so-called shallow ecology movement. The shallow approach considers it unnecessary and even counterproductive to take up philosophical or religious questions to solve the ecological crisis. Its supporters agree that changes in existing practices are needed, but changes of basic principles are not necessary. Those advocating the shallow approach do not find intrinsic value in nonhuman life forms, nor do they think the consumptive economic system is problematic. Humans ought to exploit nature, but prudently. High standards of living are not objectionable; they can be raised further by more investments in science and technology. Attempts should be made to bring less-developed nations up to our Western standard.

The deep ecology movement’s historic forebears include Henry David Thoreau, John Muir and Aldo Leopold. Rachel Carson, and others also in the United States and elsewhere, are more recent pivotal figures. In 1962 Carson’s book *Silent Spring* set off an ecological alarm. Starting with practical issues related to pesticides, she probed the philosophical assumptions underlying this attack on pests believed to stand in the way of human well being and progress.

In Europe ecological concerns joined with the peace and social justice movements to create the first wave of the “green movement.” Australians were also involved. In Eastern Europe, ecologists were considered hostile to state-sponsored industrial development and were banned. In the Third World, long-term ecological sustainability often took second place to short-term economic survival.

The deep ecology movement is for ecological sustainability, and human development that conserves the richness and diversity of life forms on Earth. This approach is said to be *biocentric* (centered on life) rather than anthropocentric (centered on human life only); it includes what Leopold called “*the land*”: the

whole community of life on the landscape—rivers, mountains, canyons, forests, grasslands, and estuaries. Reforestation, for example, should not be large tree plantations, for only producing timber and fiber for humans. Such plantations lack the biodiversity, complexity, health, and the integrity of spontaneous natural ecosystems. They are not genuine biological communities.

Those who are advocates for deep ecology principles and the more shallow reformers must learn to cooperate. Some strengths of each approach can be combined; some weakness of each offset. The former can sometimes become lost in utopian visions of a “green world”; the latter may be too absorbed in ad hoc, short-range solutions. The former can press for, and practice, more modest standards of living and support higher prices for nonvital products. Those who are less “deep” can be more pragmatic, willing to respond to what is currently politically realizable reform. Through such cooperation the supporters of both movements may help avoid crises likely to occur if ecologically responsible policies are forced too soon on populations not prepared for them. The deep premises of argumentation can add to the utilitarian arguments, which are shallow in relation to philosophical and religious premises, in need of more depth in analysis of the problems.

Discussions surrounding the deep ecology movement have implications for medical bioethics. “Rich life, simple means,” an aphorism of the deep ecology movement, suggests for medical bioethics a strengthening of preventive medicine and a reduced reliance on technically advanced treatments, especially if they require large investments of resources and energy. Medical bioethics can learn from ecological bioethics the need for a moral vision that will reorder its priorities.

Platform Principles for the Deep Ecology and other Movements

The ecology movement is one of the three great grass roots movements of the 20th Century for peace, social justice and ecological responsibility.

Social-political movements in modern democracies unite by means of platforms with broad aims and principles allowing for diversity in life philosophies and religions to support common goals. A unique feature of the 20th Century was the emergence of grass roots organizations dedicated to causes and aims that gained support by nations and people from a diversity of cultures, religions and philosophies. The *three great movements* of global and local significance from the 20th Century are the peace, social justice and environmental movements. The deep ecology movement is more focussed than the broader environmental movement. Empirical studies have helped to state the unifying DEM platform of 8 points. These are supported by a wide diversity of people from around the world. The deep ecology movement platform is that:

1. All living beings have intrinsic value.
2. The richness and diversity of life has intrinsic value.
3. Except to satisfy vital needs, humankind does not have the right to reduce this diversity and this richness.
4. It would be better for human beings if there were fewer of them, and much better for other living creatures.
5. Today the extent and nature of human interference in the various ecosystems is not sustainable, and the lack of sustainability is rising.
6. Decisive improvement requires considerable change: social, economic, technological, and ideological.

7. An ideological change would essentially entail seeking a better quality of life rather than a raised standard of living.
8. Those who accept the aforementioned points are responsible for trying to contribute directly or indirectly to the realization of the necessary changes. (From Arne Naess, 2002, *Life's Philosophy*, pp 107-108.)

Naess and others have surveyed people's views related to these principles. Many organizations use some version of them, whether or not they refer to the "deep ecology movement." For example, see the different versions of the *Earth Charter* on the web.

In discussing social-political movements we can characterize their complex changing nature by distinguishing four levels of discourse and action to articulate such movements and their support by people in diverse cultures holding different worldviews. The four levels in the chart below are **Level 1** of Ultimate premises about the world that include both nature of the world hypotheses and ultimate value norms, **Level 2** platforms for social-political movements, such as for peace, social justice and environmental responsibility. From these we develop **Level 3** policies and **Level 4** actions.

Levels Chart

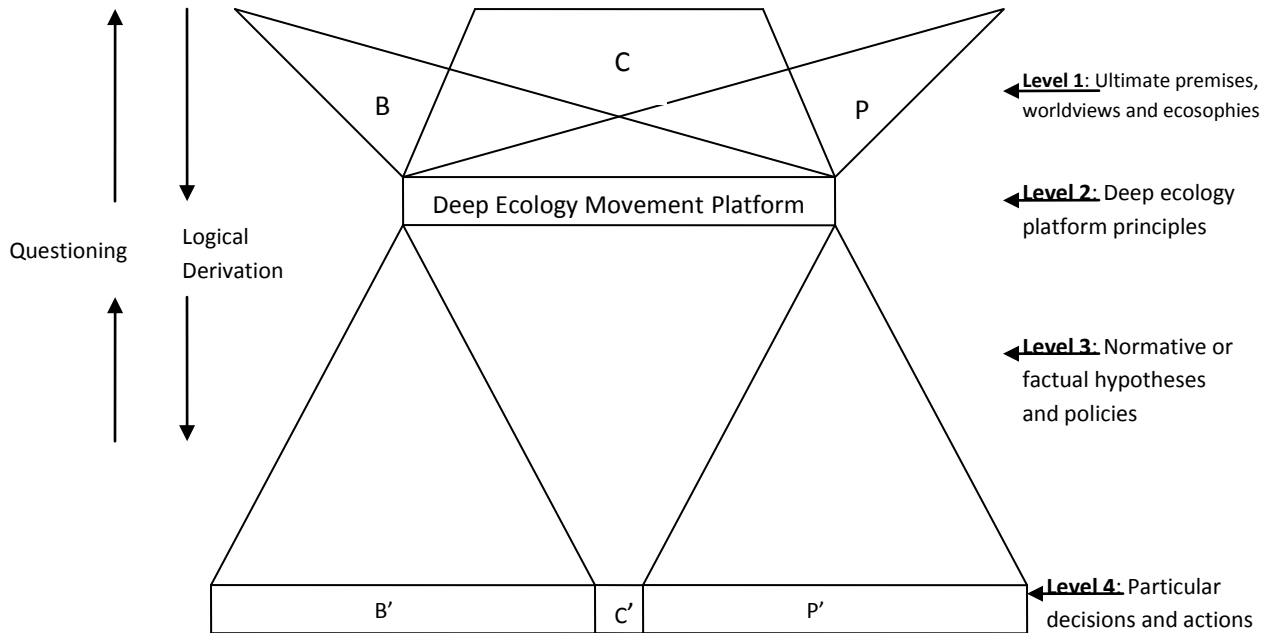
Four Levels as a Way to Organize Questioning and Articulation of Total Views

deep questioning	Level 1	Ultimate Premises	Taoism	Christianity	<i>Ecosophy T</i> , Etc.	articulation
	Level 2	Platform Principles	Peace Movement	Deep Ecology Movement	Social Justice, Etc. Movement	
	Level 3	Policies	A	B	C, Etc.	
	Level 4	Practical Actions	W	X	Y, Etc.	

(Note: In the diagram there is supposed to be an arrow pointing up for questioning and down for articulation.)

Apron Diagram

The *Apron Diagram* is a more complex way to represent how different ultimate philosophies in a movement can unite by means of platform principles that lead to different actions depending on culture, religion, ecosystem features, etc. In this diagram B represents Buddhists, C is for Christians, and P is for personal philosophies of life such as Naess' *Ecosophy T*.



This Diagram illustrates the *logical relations* between views and their connection with social movements and practical actions. “Logical relations” are verbally articulated connections between premises and conclusions. They move down the diagram in stages: some conclusions become premises for deriving new conclusions. (Naess 2008 *Ecology of Wisdom* p. 107, and *The Trumpeter* 21, 1 p 63.)

The long-range deep ecology movement, like other grass roots movements, has many variations and local applications; there are broad points of general agreement at the national and international levels. Supporters of the deep ecology movement appreciate and try to understand the diversity of cultures and languages that make up human life on Earth. People in many Western societies are from a wide variety of backgrounds with different views about the nature of the world and ultimate values. In the deep ecology movement each supporter can have a complete view that comprises the **4 Levels** of articulation and application in language and action. The Global movements for peace, social justice and ecological responsibility are supported by people with a diversity of ultimate philosophies, local practices and conditions. Each movement has its own platform principles; so, for example, the principles of the social justice and peace movements would be on **Level 2** of the Apron Diagram.

Diverse Ecosophies

We should not confuse Naess's personal of life *Ecosophy T* with the deep ecology movement. The latter is distinguished by its international, cross-cultural characteristics and 8 platform principles. Naess did not say he was a "deep ecologist", but a "supporter of the deep ecology movement." His 1973 *Inquiry* essay title describes the *long-range deep ecology movement*. He was a lifelong student of worldviews and total systems, their diversity and how they relate to global movements. In our own research, we find complex organizations and systems of communication. International grass roots movements such as the peace, social justice and environmental movements cut across cultural boundaries, but also have uniting principles and values supported from a wide variety of worldviews and religions, and discussed in international forums such as the EU and the UN.

There is a great diversity of personal philosophies of life in societies throughout the world with people who seek peace, social justice and harmony with Nature. When they seek harmony with Nature, we call their views *ecosophies*, a term Naess coined in 1973. He used his *Ecosophy T* as an example for how we can formulate a personal philosophy of life. Mature persons can say where they stand with respect to their ultimate values, the nature of the world, and their aims in life. We can articulate life philosophies aiming for ecological responsibility that are based on different sets of ultimate norms and hypotheses about the world.

Ultimate Norms are value axioms. An Ultimate Norm in Naess' personal philosophy *Ecosophy T* is "Self Realization for all beings!" By articulating our ultimate norms and nature of the world hypotheses, we can then systematize our total or complete view. From a personal life philosophy, then, we will lend support to grass roots movements. We will work with others to put various policies in place in our home areas and to do things that support our values and beliefs. This is a back and forth questioning, articulation and action described by the four levels in the Levels Chart and Apron Diagram. (See Drengson and Inoue 1995, 10-12)

In the original article on the deep ecology movement Naess wrote that:

"By an *ecosophy* I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of sofia (or) wisdom, is openly normative, it contains both norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements *and* hypotheses concerning the states of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction. The details of an *ecosophy* will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the "facts" of pollution, resources, population, etc., but also value priorities." (Naess, 1973)

He elaborates on this account in a later work:

"We study *ecophilosophy*, but to approach practical situations involving ourselves, we aim to develop our own *ecosophies*. In this book I introduce one *ecosophy*, arbitrarily called *Ecosophy T*. You are not expected to agree with all of its values and paths of derivation, but to learn the means for developing your own systems or guides, say, *Ecosophies X, Y, or Z*. Saying "your own" does not imply that the *ecosophy* is in any way an original creation by yourself. It is enough that it is a kind of total view which

you feel at home with, “where you philosophically belong.” Along with one’s own life, it is always changing.” (Naess, 1989, p. 37)

*Etymologically, the word “ecosophy” combines *oikos* and *sophia*, “household” and “wisdom.” As in “ecology,” “eco-” has an appreciably broader meaning than the immediate family, household, and community. “Earth household” is closer the mark. So an *ecosophy* becomes a *philosophical world-view or system inspired by the conditions of life in the ecosphere*. It should then be able to serve as an individual’s philosophical grounding for an acceptance of the principles or platform of deep ecology as outlined.” (Naess, 1989, pp. 36-37)

From the above observations then, we say that Naess distinguishes between ultimate philosophies or worldviews, platform principles that unite people with different ultimate views, policy formulations applied in specific national or jurisdictional contexts, and practical actions taken by specific individuals in local places. The three dimensional apron diagram helps to show these levels. (A version of this illustration is in the article “The Basics of Deep Ecology” in *The Ecology of Wisdom* 2008 p. 107.) I have used the *Levels Chart* as a complement to the Apron, but neither bring out fully the complex and changing nature of life in modern cultures and their social-political movements, that are always changing.

NB: Warwick Fox (1990) suggests that those, including Naess, whose ultimate premises call for an extended sense of identification with an ecological Self be called *transpersonal ecologists*, but Naess would say that they have transpersonal ecosophies. Fox says that the emphasis on *Self*-realization leads to exploring all levels of awareness, from the pre-personal (sentient and reactive), to the personal (cognitive and deliberative) to the transpersonal (wise and reciprocally responsive). In extending our sense of identification and care, and in opening our capacity to love, we flourish and realize ourselves in harmony with others. We come to understand, as Naess says, that our own *Self*-realization is interconnected with the *Self*-realization of others, including other beings. We cannot flourish and realize ourselves, if we destroy their homes, and interfere with their possibilities for *Self*-realization.

In technology dominated cities and towns of East and West, increasing numbers of humans lack regular contact with the natural world. This is especially critical in educating children. Designing wild forest, meadow and pond *Ecosophies* is a way to deeply connect with *Nature*. Visit local meadows, ponds, woods and forests to explore how the beings therein live their ecosophies. What, for example, is the ecological wisdom of cedars, alders, flowers, butterflies, ants and frogs? They each have their own stories and live *ecosophies* of their kind. How can *we* live and act *respectfully* in special forest or meadow places in ecological harmony and also give something back to our local forest and meadow communities? They give us many gifts, what can we give to them? Go with children to the ponds, meadows and forests so we can learn from *Nature* first hand. Ask children what we can do to benefit the forests. Invite them to create their own *ecosophies* for harmony with *Nature*. (Drengson and Taylor 2009) If we give back more than we receive, *we act beautifully*, as Naess observed. (Naess 2008 pp 133-139.)

SEE ALSO: *Animal Welfare and Rights; Endangered Species and Biodiversity; Future Generations, Obligations to; Jainism, Bioethics in; Native American Religion, Bioethics in; Population Ethics; Population Policies; Value and Valuation; Xenotransplantation* and other *Environmental Ethics* subentries

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Environmental Ethics

Dr. Arne Naess was Norway's most distinguished philosopher and was given numerous awards during his lifetime and after. He died a few weeks shy of his 97th birthday in 2009. He was a lifelong traveller and mountaineer who led many first ascents and expeditions. His Nephew also named Arne Naess, led the first Norwegian expedition to climb to the summit of Mt Everest. Old Arne was the youngest member of the Vienna Circle where he completed his doctoral thesis on the nature of science and the behaviour of scientists. He was then awarded a post doctoral research appointment at the University of California in Berkeley under the direction of the great American empirical psychologist E. C. Tolman. Naess did his own rat research with rats in cages. He then continued his post doctoral research by studying the behavior and actions of the fellow scientists who were doing empirical research on rats. Just before the 2nd World War Naess returned to Norway to take up a full professorship and head of the department of Philosophy at the University of Oslo, which was his home city. He remained in that position until he took early retirement in the 1960s to "live and not just function." He was a strong advocate for Nature, human rights and peace. He was one of the authorities in Europe on the active practice of nonviolence and direct actions in Gandhi's way. He created a practice he called Gandhian Boxing. He believed we need to train to practice

nonviolence effectively. He was a master of many languages including the classical scholarly languages, even Sanskrit. He was a gifted musician and mathematician who had two Masters Degrees, one in astronomy and the other in philosophy. Those who knew him treasured his childlike nature and joy in simple things. He was inspired by the mountains and considered Mt. Halingskarvet where he built his mountain hut Tvergastein to be his “old father” as his own father died before he was a year old. During his lifetime he published over thirty books and hundreds of articles, contributed to conferences and mountaineering projects including travelling to the poles. He spoke on campuses all over the world and was on the leading edge of comparative studies of world views and cultures. He was a gifted linguist whose studies of language took him from studying synonyms to broad interdisciplinary work promoting global communication to facilitate ending conflict, war and violence. *The Trumpeter Journal* was created by inspiration from his work. He started the influential journal of the social sciences and humanities published in English in Norway called *Inquiry*. The ten volume *Selected Works of Arne Naess (SWAN)* 2005 was undertaken by a team of scholars to make his work available in up-to-date English versions. From that effort a single collection of his work was published before he died called *Ecology of Wisdom*. He returned to North America and California over and over throughout his long life. A book on his life was published in Norwegian whose title could be translated “A long life with an old father” in honor of Mt Halingskarvet where his hut Tvergastein was built.

Alan Drengson Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Adjunct Professor in Environmental and Graduate Studies at the University of Victoria in Canada. His areas are Eastern philosophy, comparative religion, environmental philosophy and multicultural technology studies. He teaches and practices meditation for harmony with Nature. He loves wild dancing, skiing, wilderness journeying and mountaineering. He has published many articles and books such as the nonfiction trilogy *Beyond Environmental Crisis (Shifting Paradigms)*, *The Practice of Technology* and *Wild Way Home*. He recently finished two book manuscripts “Being at Home with One’s Self” and “Caring for Home Places.” He is author of an ecotopian novel *Doc Forest and Blue Mt. Ecostery*, and *Sacred Journey*, a series of three poetry books. He is Associate Editor of the 10 Volume *Selected Works of Arne Naess (SWAN)* published by Springer in 2005. He is the coeditor of 5 anthologies: *Philosophy of Society*; *Deep Ecology Movement*; *Ecoforestry: The Art and Science of Sustainable Forest Use*; *Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*; and *Wild Forestry: Practicing Nature’s Wisdom*. He is founding editor of the now online journal *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* and of *Ecoforestry*. He leads workshops in the *Wild Way*. He presented in the *Massey Symposium* at the University of Toronto’s Massey College in March 2005. In spring 2008 he was a Visiting Professor at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby BC in Canadian Studies and taught “Multiculturalism, Sense of Place and Personal Identity.” Email: alandren@uvic.ca. Samples of his work are at: www.ecostery.org and <http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca>.